

# Jesus Rejects the Rejecters

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well good evening friends, we come now to the time in our service where we take up our Bibles and we'll have our reading from Mark chapter 3. Mark chapter 3 we have a one-off this week in the Gospel of Mark. You'll find that on page 838 of the Church Bibles.

Mark chapter 3 we're going to look at verse 20 to 35 specifically but we're going to read from verse 7.

Hear the word of the Lord. Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea and a great crowd followed from Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem.

And I do me a and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon. When the great crowd heard all that he was doing they came to him.

And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd lest they crush him. But he had healed many so that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him.

[ 1 : 09 ] And whenever the unclean spirits saw him they fell down before him and cried out, You are the Son of God. And he strictly ordered them not to make him known.

And he went up on the mountain and called to himself those whom he desired. And they came to him and he appointed twelve whom he also named apostles, so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons.

He appointed the twelve, Simon to whom he gave the name Peter, James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James, to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, sons of thunder, Andrew and Philip and Bartholomew and Matthew and Thomas and James the son of Alphaeus, and Theodos and Simon the Canaanian, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.

Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, He is out of his mind.

And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, He is possessed by Beelzebul, and by the prince of demons he casts out demons. And he called them to him and said to them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan?

[ 2 : 40 ] If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end.

But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.

Truly I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin.

For they were saying, He has an unclean spirit. And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, Your mother and your brothers are outside seeking you.

And he answered them, Who are my mother and my brothers? And looking at those who sat around him, he said, Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.

[ 3 : 58 ] Well, amen. May God bless to us this, his word. Well, please do have your Bibles open again to Mark chapter 3, the passage we had read. Mark chapter 3.

How does Jesus respond to those who reject him? How does Jesus respond to those who reject him? Well, Mark chapter 3 teaches us the answer.

This is a one-off. We've jumped straight into Mark's gospel this evening. So where are we? What's going on? Well, we're not that long into Jesus' public ministry. And in chapter 1, Mark announces

that God's promised king, the one that the Old Testament prophets so eagerly anticipated, has come.

He's arrived. And Jesus is this king. And John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit, and God the Father all bear witness to that fact. And then what you've got in the rest of chapter 1 is Mark fires out detail after detail about the supremacy and utter authority about God's promised king.

Jesus goes to fully grown men and calls them to follow him. And like that, they leave their livelihoods and their jobs and follow him. He preaches, unlike any of the religious leaders of his day. [ 5 : 16 ] And he has utter supremacy over the powers of darkness and evil and disease. And from 1 verse 40 to 3 verse 6, there's this big section which really has six incidents where Jesus is revealing his authority to the Jewish religious leaders of his day.

And let me just say, throughout these six incidents, Jesus is extremely provocative in how he acts and speaks to these religious leaders. Mark has carefully ordered his account into these kind of three incidents.

And what you'll find is, if you look at this when you go home, the middle incident in these groups of three are centered upon scandalous claims Jesus makes about being the Son of Man.

So just look at 2 verse 10. Jesus claims to be the Son of Man who has the authority on earth to forgive sins. And then 2.28, the second scandalous claim.

2.28, he claims to be the Son of Man who is even Lord over the Sabbath. I wonder if you realize just how provocative that was for Jesus to call himself the Son of Man.

[ 6 : 26 ] It was hugely significant and it would have been extremely familiar to the religious leaders because it's taken from the Old Testament prophet of Daniel. You remember that Daniel as a prophet was given nightmarish visions of the future coming of the kingdom of God.

And in chapter 7, Daniel says this, I saw in the night a vision and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a Son of Man. And the Son of Man came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.

And to the Son of Man was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all people, nations and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall never pass away and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

Jesus is saying, I am this Son of Man. Very provocative. Everyone would have known that, especially the religious teachers who would have known their Old Testament backwards.

He is the Messiah. The one who would receive all glory, power, dominion and authority from God the Father appointed to our reign over all nations whose kingdom will be unshakable.

[ 7 : 39 ] Now as the religious leaders hear this, how should they have responded to Jesus?

Because by the way, Jesus backed up his claim by miraculous signs. How should they have responded?

Well, here's how they should have responded. They should have said, King Jesus, we believe that you are the Christ and we repent. We publicly denounce living under our own rule and following our own traditions and instead, we bow the knee to you as our King.

You are the Holy One. You have the authority to forgive us for our sins. And without you, we will not be right with God the Father. You are the sin doctor and we need you to treat us desperately because we are spiritually sick in our hearts.

We confess that you alone can teach us the proper interpretation of God's law. We've got the Sabbath completely wrong. We've turned God's law into cold, oppressive religion.

Oh, King Jesus, please save us, teach us, rule us. Now, that is how they should have responded. But do they respond to Jesus like that?

[ 8 : 41 ] Answer, no chance. No chance. And in fact, Marcus carefully structured his account to highlight the fact that, I can't believe it, the more they know about Jesus and his authority, the more they totally hate him.

The more they know about Jesus' authority, the greater the hatred. Let me just run through chapter 2 highlighting some verses in this. And what you'll see is their growing hostility is like a kettle of hatred against their own Messiah.

They start by questioning Jesus' authority internally in their minds. Look at 2 verse 6. Now, some of the scribes were sitting there questioning in their hearts.

Why does this man speak like that? He's blaspheming. And then they move to outwardly questioning Jesus' disciples.

Look at 2 verse 16. And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, why does he eat with sinners and tax collectors?

[ 9 : 45 ] The hatred is rattling up here. By the time we get to 2 verse 24, they start to question Jesus directly about the fact that his disciples were not following their traditions that they had imposed upon the Sabbath.

2 verse 24. And the Pharisees were saying to Jesus, look, why are they doing what is not lawful in the Sabbath? And by chapter 3 verse 2, they're actually looking for an opportunity to publicly snare Jesus and slander his name as a lawbreaker.

3 verse 2. And they watched Jesus to see whether he would heal on the Sabbath so that they might accuse him. And finally, when Jesus wonderfully and powerfully heals a man on the Sabbath, confirming that he is the Son of Man, their hatred reaches boiling point.

3 verse 6. These men, who claim to be leaders of God's people, actually start to plot the murder of God's king. And they hate him so much that they'd be willing to unite themselves with the Herodians.

They were sworn enemies of the Pharisees. They hate Jesus so much they'd rather join in union with sworn enemies. As John the Apostle says, he came to his own, but his own did not receive him.

[ 11 : 08 ] And so Mark chapter 3 is really all about Jesus' response to this murderous rejection. And as usual, Jesus continues to be utterly provocative. He doesn't pull his punches or mince his words.

Let me sum up for you the big idea that I think Mark is trying to communicate to us. And so if you've fallen asleep this evening, which some of you might have, then now's the time to wake up. What is Mark trying to teach us this?

Well, how does Jesus respond to rejection? Answer, with rejection. rejection. Jesus rejects rejecters. People come up to Jesus and say, you know Jesus, we don't want you as our king. As though Jesus needed their votes. And Jesus turns to them and says, do you know what? If that's the case, I won't have you in my kingdom. With our remaining time this evening, let's go through the chapter 3 in a bit more detail.

so that we know what's going on and then with the remainder of our time, I'll pull out some applications for us today. In 7 to 12, Jesus withdraws from unbelieving Israel.

[ 12 : 18 ] He's been rejected and they plot his murder and Jesus, unperturbed, just walks away and carries on. Carries on in his ministry. He's not bothered by their hostility.

And this is something you'll find as you read through the whole of Mark's gospel. Whenever Jesus meets someone from Jerusalem, it is never a positive encounter. And Jesus always walks away from them after the confrontation.

And in verse 13, just notice that he does something that if you know your Bible well, again, would set off alarm bells in your head. Please look at verse 13. Jesus went up a mountain and called to him those he desired.

And they came to him and he appointed 12 whom he also named apostles. Now what does that remind you of? Or at least, what would it remind an Israelite in Jesus' day of?

Of course, the obvious answer is the Exodus. When the Lord called 12 tribes of Israel out of Egypt to himself on Mount Sinai and they came to him. Do you see what Jesus is doing here?

[ 13 : 22 ] It's a massive statement. So many unbelieving hearts reject him. Even within the leadership of Israel and so he rejects them and replaces them with 12 new leaders.

These ordinary men listed in verse 13 to 19 are the remnant of faith. These men are the true Israel, the true people of God. And Christ has appointed them to lead his renewed Israel at the next stage of salvation history.

These men would be the brothers Jesus would use to establish his kingdom throughout the whole earth. Can I just say on this point we need to be very careful whenever we hear about Christians speaking about religiously pouring their time and effort into prospering the modern state of Israel as the answer to the world's problems.

Such folk are gravely mistaken and have been misled by poor Bible handling. They need to give themselves a good dose of Mark's gospel especially later in chapter 11 to 13.

It is over for earthly Jerusalem as the heart of God's activity on earth. The temple and all of the ceremonial shadows of the old covenant are now superseded because the Christ has come and so too has the new covenant.

[ 14 : 35 ] And that's what we're beginning to see in Mark chapter 3. Jesus withdraws from the scribes and appoints the new guys. Now you might think to yourself well that's obvious.

That's just obvious. Every Christian knows that. I don't need to be reminded of that. Well can I just say two of my good friends are ministers of churches just like this one down in the south of Britain and recently they've been telling me that the genuine gospel work that the church has been trying to do has been greatly inhibited because members of their congregation have been deceived by this sort of pro-Israel pro-earthly Israel priority.

If you think that way as well if you think we should be investing in earthly Jerusalem as opposed to the heavenly true Jerusalem well you need to change your thinking because you're wrong.

So Jesus appoints the twelve who will lead the renewed church for Israel as a nation has become spiritually dead and completely blind to the truth about God and that's just painfully obvious from the incident that takes place from verse 22 to verse 30.

We'll come back to the little incidents that bookend in that section where Jesus has an encounter with his family in a moment but just notice how wicked these teachers of the law have become.

[ 15 : 54 ] Please look at verse 22. And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying Jesus is possessed by Beelzebul and by the prince of demons he casts out demons.

These men have just witnessed God's Messiah performing powerful signs by the Holy Spirit signs that confirm his identity as the Christ the kingdom of God the visible rule and reign of the Lord is breaking in right in front of their eyes and what do they do?

They say oh he's not from God he's actually from Satan Jesus is satanic that's what they're saying they accuse Jesus of casting out demons by the power of demons they purposefully misrepresent Jesus they misrepresent him on purpose because if they confess that he has done this by the power of God then that would mean that they have to bow the knee to him but that's precisely what they don't want to do.

Friends this is what the power of sin does to people. Remember sin isn't just the bad things that we do isn't just the transgressions we commit against God it's also a power that holds us all in deadly bondage.

Every human heart that's not been taken captive by the Holy Spirit has been blinded has blinded the truth about God so much so that even these religious men who've grown up with the Bible when they see the incarnate son of God in front of them they look at him and they go demon that's what sin does to the human heart.

[ 17 : 26 ] So if you can look at Jesus here and if you believe that he is who he claims to be then you should thank God the Father because that is a miracle that you can confess that. I think sometimes when we look for assurance that we are genuine believers or if the Spirit is working in our lives we look for some kind of fireworks in our life but actually it is a miracle that you confess Jesus as Lord.

That is the risen power of the Lord Jesus in your heart that's taking you from utter deadness and blindness to recognizing him and confessing him. Give thanks to God because if it wasn't for his Spirit you would be exactly like these religious leaders.

Jesus is satanic. That's their conclusion. And Jesus refutes them by simple logic. And he says that's just ridiculous. Verse 23 How can Satan cast out Satan?

If a kingdom is divided against itself that kingdom won't stand. Imagine if on D-Day when the allied forces swarmed the beaches of Normandy how bizarre it would be if Churchill had ordered his troops to start fighting one another.

They would kill themselves. That's bizarre. And that's what Jesus is saying here. I'm not doing these things by the works of the devil. I'm doing them by the power of God.

[ 18 : 44 ] Please look at verse 27. No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strong man then indeed he may plunder his house.

Do you see what Jesus is saying in this parable? He describes Satan as a strong man ruling over this world and by healing and preaching the kingdom to people Jesus has broken into this world of darkness this world of sin and misery and he has subdued the strong man he's tied up the power of Satan and he's stealing the strong man's stuff.

In this case it is people people like you and I who by nature are in bondage to evil and Satan's power. Satan is the strong man but in Jesus we find the one who is stronger.

He has come to set the captives free from bondage. And so the accusation of the scribes that they fire at Jesus is so wrong.

It reveals that Jesus isn't satanic but they are. They are satanic. Their hearts are far from God despite how it might look like on the outside.

[ 19 : 55 ] They might look like they're God's people on the outside but inside they're deeply perverse to God's Messiah. They have rejected God's King and another way of saying that is stated in verse 29 to blaspheme the Holy Spirit.

But friends often people have ripped these verses out of context and poured all sorts of wrong interpretations into what it means to blaspheme the Holy Spirit. Let's listen to Jesus.

What does Jesus say? Well he says blaspheming the Holy Spirit is to reject him. That's what it means. It is the Holy Spirit who testifies to points to brings glory to King Jesus and so to reject Jesus is to blaspheme the Holy Spirit and as verse 28 to 29 see this is the only sin that is unforgivable.

The consequences of rejecting the Spirit's testimony about Jesus being the Christ will never end because to reject the one who gives forgiveness is by definition to reject forgiveness.

that's why it's unforgivable. So that's the rejection of the religious leaders and it's an aggressive rejection but you know Mark also tells us of a different type of rejection in this passage and it's a more if you like respectable rejection and it actually comes once again from the most surprising of places from Jesus' own biological family.

[ 21 : 26 ] Now as you can probably tell I'm a man who's no stranger to a sandwich or two. I've had some beautiful sandwiches in my time but we all know the basic structure of a sandwich don't we?

There's a bit of bread there's a filling and then there's a bit of bread. But just notice that this part of Mark's gospel is structured like a sandwich. Mark loves using this it's a wonderful technique there's a bit of bread in verse 20 to 21 and then there's a second bit of bread in verse 30 to 35.

Both of them are describing incidents between Jesus and his family and they both sandwich or bookend this aggressive rejection of the scribes that we've just looked at.

Now whenever you encounter a sandwich like this in the Bible you need to remember that the middle bit controls how you interpret the bits of bread and the bits of bread control how you interpret the filling. And so what Mark wants us to see here is that the bits of bread around the filling the incidents between Jesus and his family are also on this theme of rejection.

It's not good it's not a positive encounter. Let's look at the bits of bread in more detail. Look at verse 20 to 21 just run your eye over it Jesus' family upon hearing about his teaching and the huge following that he is receiving they think he's bonkers they think he's out of his mind he needs to be sectioned get him to a psychiatrist get some medication.

[ 22 : 53 ] His family don't believe for a second that he is the Messiah. Now we can't be too hard on them because it is true that there was a change in Jesus after he was publicly anointed by the Spirit and equipped to start his public ministry as the Messiah.

I take it that that's what his family are so puzzled about here. They're probably thinking to themselves well Jesus wasn't like this when he was a boy. what's going on? So there was a change in Jesus when he was publicly anointed for his mission but that shouldn't have stopped his family from believing.

They were wrong to think that they do here. And by the way the next time you're sharing the gospel with a Roman Catholic I think these verses might come in handy because you can hardly claim that Mary was without sin when Jesus himself rebuked all of his family that included Mary.

Please look at verse 31 to 35 the second bit of bread. And his mother and his brothers came and standing outside they sent to him and called him and a crowd was sitting around him and they said to him your mother and your brothers are outside seeking you.

And he answered them who are my mother and my brothers? And looking at those who sat around him he said here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of God he is my brother and sister and mother.

[ 24 : 15 ] Do you see what Jesus does? He defines membership to his true family not to be marked by blood but marked by belief. Belief. Look at verse 35 again.

Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother. Who gets to be a member of God? His family? Well the answer is those who have done the will of God. And what is it to do the will of God? Well Mark has already told us in 1.15 repent and believe the gospel.

That is believe in Jesus that he is the Christ the son of God surrender your life to him. Those who do that will receive the highest privilege of adoption into God's family.

The religious leaders reject Jesus and so he rejects them replacing them with 12 new leaders. Jesus' family reject Jesus and so he challenges them that they too must believe and do the will of God.

It's not by blood it's by belief. I mean Jesus is really affirming what the whole Bible teaches isn't it? As the Apostle Paul says in Romans 9 it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God but children of the promise are counted as offspring.

[ 25 : 34 ] Friends our time is gone let me sum up by pulling out some lessons for us this evening and hopefully they should be very obvious by now. Firstly Jesus will reject those who reject him and so therefore rejecting Jesus is the worst decision you could possibly make.

If you say that you don't want him as your king if you're here tonight and that's you and you say I don't want him I don't need him well then his reply to you is this if that's so I won't have you in my kingdom.

And in the end Jesus will give you what you ask for. If you were to read on in Mark's Gospel perhaps you'd like to do that tonight when you go home you will hear Jesus speak some of the most terrifying words in the whole Bible about the eternal consequences for rejecting him.

You can ignore Jesus you can carry on refusing to surrender to him but can I just say when he comes as judge you will not stand a chance and that day you will know alas it will be too late you will meet Jesus whether you want to or not and you will know that rejecting him is the worst decision anyone could ever make.

But friends there is hope there is real hope and joy even from a passage like this where Jesus doesn't pull his punches because whilst Jesus rejects rejecters Jesus receives receivers Jesus will receive into his closest family all those who bow the knee to him and obey him all those who do the will of God that believe that he is the one from the Father and turn away from living life in rebellion against God and seeking to obey by the power of the spirit of adoption.

[ 27 : 23 ] Jesus is still calling people today to repent he is calling all of us in this building tonight and from elsewhere you should take real heart from the fact that elsewhere in the Bible we are told that Jesus blood relatives did eventually surrender their lives to him didn't they?

They did come to him by faith and repentance and receive the warning of verse 35 maybe you are here this evening and you have been a staunch rejecter of Christ for years but it is still not too late to heed his call come to him on your hands and knees seek his mercy all those who do that will be given the highest privilege of being called sons of God lastly what does this mean for all of us who have already bowed the knee to Jesus?

What if you have been a Christian for many years? Well I think this passage teaches us this do not be surprised if you face this type of rejection yourself if this is the way that the unbelieving world responded to our king then you can bet your boots this is the way the unbelieving world will respond to us rejection may come from even the most surprising of places like within the covenant community within the church it's the same today as it was in Christ's day often the people who present themselves in church as being the most holy people the most pious people are actually in actual fact the most perverted in their hearts to Christ I had another mate of mine I have a lot of mates another mate of mine got a job down south in a church and as he arrived over about six months he patiently preached the word of God to people he unleashed the word of God upon hearts people were changed new people started to come in people were being converted wonderfully the spirit of the Lord

Jesus Christ was at work but with the gospel fruit also came real opposition but you know the opposition didn't come from the liberal council it didn't come from people without the church it came from people within the church it came from people who had been members for years who looked like they were Christians they were saying things like we are furious with all these new people you're bringing in you're spoiling our church for us you're spoiling the feel they were looking at the work of the Messiah and they were calling it evil do not be surprised if opposition comes from within here it's alarming isn't it also I think this passage is also a word of comfort to those who've been rejected by their own biological family I know that there are people in this very building tonight who've been rejected by their blood relatives their loved ones simply because they love the Lord Jesus and obey the gospel I think of another man that I know who lives elsewhere and he came to faith through Christ later in life through Christianity explored and when he told his parents they went

absolutely mental he said son you've lost your mind and we don't want to see you that much if that's alright

I think of another man again he was converted later in his life I think he was about 60 when the Lord Jesus burst into his heart and brought him to faith and when he told his son his son said dad you're mental and actually his son stopped him from seeing his grandchildren because he didn't want the grandchildren to be polluted by this bonkers Christianity can I just say if that's you if you've been rejected by your biological family isn't it a comfort to know that you have a high priest who was rejected by his family first you have a high priest who knows exactly what you're going through he knows exactly the pain in your heart and he loves you any costly sacrifice any loss that we go through for the sake of Christ and the gospel it will not go unnoticed by our king he will not forget listen to the words Jesus says later on in Mark he says this truly I say to you there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the gospel who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions and in the age to come eternal life

[ 32 : 02 ] I hope we as a church family will be looking out for those members who have been rejected by their biological family because that's one of the reasons the church that's how we should function isn't it those who've lost their earthly families we the family of Christ should be stepping up taking responsibility so if you know someone who's been through this you must give them love and support I hope we're doing that as a church well let's be quiet for a moment to respond to God's word in our hearts and then I'll pray for us heavenly father as we look at mark three and see what the power of sin does to the human heart how it renders people spiritually dead and blind to the true identity of your son we remember that this is what we would be like if it went for your grace and mercy we ask that you would move in our hearts so that we will surrender to Jesus as your king so that we will listen to him as your prophet and so that we will trust him as our high priest the only one who can save us from our sin gracious God help us not to be surprised when the world rejects us like it rejected our king and help us to rally around those in the congregation who are battered and bruised and show them the love assure them of the eternal home that is theirs in the Lord

Jesus and all these things Amen